Australian Bureau of Statistics

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MAY 2005 issue 35

census update

100 years and counting!

Now Available
ABS Year Book 2005

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census corner

Your community is counting on you

The ABS is looking to employ members of all ethnic and cultural groups

In the lead up to the 2006 Census, the ABS has revamped its procedures for the employment of temporary collection staff.

With close to 30,000 positions available, the logistics of recruiting Census Collectors and Area Supervisors is a massive undertaking. In previous years, tens of thousands of application forms had to be printed and distributed, then each application evaluated and positions filled.

However for the 2006 Census the ABS will be taking applications online. The ABS has developed a real-time automated system that will make applying quicker and easier as well as reduce the administrative, logistical and environmental problems associated with thousands of hard copy applications. Applicants will also be able to apply by phone. If either of these methods pose any problems for potential applicants, a hard copy form will continue to be made available.

With tight labour market conditions in many areas it can be difficult to attract sufficient numbers of staff. Attracting sufficient applicants is most difficult in remote areas and the inner cities.

The ABS has employed a small number of people to work on the tests that are undertaken prior to each census. As well as testing field and processing procedures, these tests have also allowed the recruitment system to be tested.

The ABS is appealing to people to make a positive contribution to their community and be involved in this significant and nationally important event. The ABS looks to recruit workers that reflect the community in which they will work, so are looking to employ people from across the spectrum including Indigenous persons, older persons, and members of all ethnic and cultural groups.

The recruitment campaign will be the first step in a large and co-ordinated public awareness campaign informing the public of the importance of the Census.

East Timor completes first Census

East Timor has successfully completed its first National Census since gaining independence on 20 May 2002.

The ABS has been helping East Timor over the past two years by providing quality assurance advice on the preparations for its 2004 Census. Responding to an approach from the United Nations Population Fund in 2002, the ABS has sent a number of people to East Timor to provide technical advice. Statistics New Zealand also lent a hand in the process.

Paul Lowe from the ABS Census Program has been to East Timor three times during the past two years to advise on setting up for the Census, including strategies for enumeration and mapping. Paul's third trip coincided with Census Day, 11 July 2004,

Issues arose throughout the planning process. One of the more significant dilemmas faced by Census organisers was how to ensure total coverage of the population in a country without an address system. To overcome this problem for the 2004 Census, East Timor utilised state-of-the-art Geographical Positioning System technology, which uses a satellite to pinpoint the location of every household in the country.

Paul noted the high levels of enthusiasm throughout East Timor for the 2004 Census. "Everyone, from the President and the Prime Minister to people working in the fields, regarded it as a big national event," said Paul.

"Preliminary population figures are already available and show a much larger than predicted count of 924,642 people in East Timor, compared with a 2001 estimate of 787,000. The population growth can be accounted for by people returning to East Timor following the end of the violence, as well as a large increase in fertility rates also associated with a return to peace." The surge in the population of East Timor represents an increase of 17.5% on the 2001 estimate, with the population in some areas doubling. East Timor's population is poised to reach one million later this year.

President Xanana Gusmao and wife Kirsty Sword Gusmao, play their part in East Timor's first Census

ABS awards contract for 2006 Census call centre

The ABS has chosen Salmat Ltd to provide call centre infrastructure to handle the 800,000 calls expected for the 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

Salmat, an Australian owned company, won the $4.5 million contract through an open tender process. Head of the ABS's Census Development and Field Organisation, David Nauenburg, said a major part of Salmat's success related to its comprehensive call centre experience. The Census Inquiry Service answers public inquiries about the Census itself, the delivery and collection procedures used and how to complete the Census form. It also provides for messages to be sent to collection staff where further action is required to ensure the delivery or collection of forms.

Salmat will partner with Telstra to deliver technical aspects of the project, which include dispatch of about 1.4 million SMS messages to Census collectors, as well as use of a Natural Language Speech Recognition technology assistant in the management of inbound calls. Previously Salmat has successfully worked with such government bodies as the NSW Department of Ageing, the Australian Tax Office and CentreLink.

Mr Peter Boyle of Salmat said: "It is expected that the 2006 Census will be that year's largest call centre project. It will involve more than 500 Salmat operators to handle general enquiries, multilingual and other special needs of the population." These special needs include assistance for the hearing and visually impaired and on-line form completion information for eCensus users.

The ABS's Paul Williams and Salmat's Peter Boyle shake on the deal

Did you know?

The 2001 Census showed 26% of persons born in Australia had at least one overseas-born parent

IBM online for eCensus

IBM Global Services has been chosen from a field of more than 30 submissions as the industry partner to develop the eCensus system for the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The tender process began in July of 2003 before the decision was made to award the contract to IBM early in 2005.

The system will initially be adopted in the August Dress Rehearsal this year involving some 40,000 households before undergoing further refinement and being used for the 2006 Census.

In addition to developing the Internet form itself, IBM will also be providing all the electronic infrastructure for the eCensus. Tests have been conducted within the ABS's own infrastructure to determine how well the electronic process combined with other field systems, returning positive results.

The eCensus presents challenges to the ABS in terms of how well it fits in with the collection control system to ensure everyone is counted in the Census. Part of the solution is to provide every household with a PIN contained within a sealed envelope to provide people with access to the eCensus. Once an electronic form has been submitted, an SMS message will be sent to the relevant census collectors' mobile phone to inform them that paper forms don't need to be collected from that particular household. Any information lodged through the system will be protected by strong data encryption and by a series of firewalls and other security harware once it is received by the ABS.

At this stage the ABS is expecting around 10% of Australians to use these eCensus Internet forms.

Team members Tenille Johnson and Peter Clark are currently involved in preparation for the eCensus

However this figure is expected to rise in years to come with the eCensus program being described as the "way of the future". In addition to the availability of eCensus forms the traditional paper forms will continue to be delivered to every Australian household.

The ABS is also currently investigating ways to improve the eCensus for 2011 by investigating the likely impact that new and emerging technology will have on the eCensus program.

Did you know?

Around 7,300 collectors and enumerators took part in the 1911 Census. In 2001, the number of field staff employed for the Census was 39,870.

100 Years and counting

Ever since its humble beginning, the Census has always played an important role in Australian society. The Census shows us not only the progress and change that is occurring within the nation but also the nature and rate of this progress.

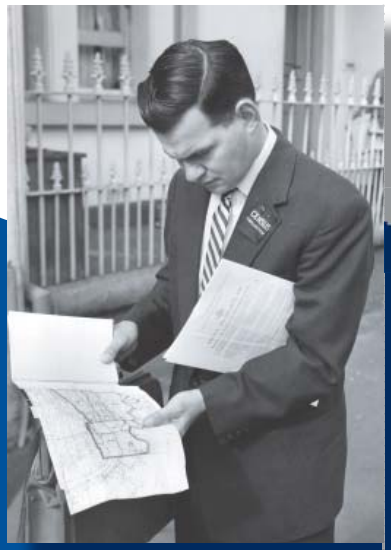
Population estimates based on the Census are vital in determining the population size of each state and territory, and designing equitable boundaries for electoral districts. In this way the Census is vital to the practical application of democracy and has also been a major element in determining the allocation of federal funding to the states and territories.

Although regular stocktakes of the population occurred in Australia during colonial times, the first Census after federation occurred in 1901 when it was run separately by each state. However, it wasn't until 1911 that we would have our first integrated, national census, made possible through the Census and Statistics Act 1905. Close to 7,300 collectors and enumerators were employed for collection work on this initial census, some of whom travelled on horseback to cover their allocated areas. Information from this first census would eventually be used to uncover a link between rubella and congenital problems for unborn children by combining 1911 data with information from the 1921 and 1933 Census and health records. The 1933 Census was originally due to be held in 1931, but due to the depression the decision was made to delay the census.

In addition to regular Censuses the Bureau has also conducted two 'war censuses'. The first was conducted in July of 1915 and the second in July of 1939. The aim of these censuses was determine the availability of manpower and the nation's wealth. The next conventional census wouldn't be conducted until 1947 due to delays resulting from World War II.

A Snapshot of Australia, 1901–2001

In celebration of Australia's Centenary of Federation in 2001, this snapshot includes data from the Censuses of Australian States in 1901, along with generally comparative data from the 2001 Census.



For the development of the 1954 Census other international organisations, including the statistical office of the United Nations, would be consulted for the first time. The 1961 Census was the last to use mechanical tabulation with the 1966 Census seeing the introduction of the first computers used to process census results. It would also mark the introduction of Censuses being conducted every 5 years as opposed to every 10 years as was first planned.

Following the introduction of legislation from the referendum of 1967, the 1971 Census would be the first time all Indigenous Australians were included in published census counts. Major changes were made

to the number and manner of questions included on Census forms for the Censuses of 1976 and 1981. The 1976 Census was also unique for the fact that only 50% of its results were processed due to budgetary constraints. Many of the changes that were made to the Census form prior to the 1981 Census occurred as a result the ABS conducting more public consultation than any previous Census. This was seen as a major factor in the success of the 1981 Census.

Then in 1986, a range of new dissemination channels, including diskettes and CD-ROMs, were used for data release. In 1991 optical mark recognition technology was used in the processing of census forms. That year also saw the first release of Census Update to users of Census information. A two stage release process was utilised for the first time in the 1996 Census. This resulted in data being released within 12 months after the Census, a significant improvement on previous years.

The most recent Census occurred in 2001. For this Census Australians were given the option of whether they wanted to be part of the Time Capsule Project and have their details preserved for release in 99 years. Over 50% of the population chose to be a part of this project, with their records now safely preserved in the vaults of the National Archives.

In future years, one area of significant development will be the collection of Census information via the Internet.

As part of its centenary celebrations, later this year the ABS will be publishing a detailed history of the organisation. Not only of interest to former ABS and Census staff, it will also be a valuable record of the development of a great Australian institution.

The publication will include a chapter dedicated entirely to the history of Australia's Census of Population and Housing. The chapter documents the history of censuses in Australia from the early colonial musters to the most recent Census conducted in 2001 and includes a discussion on the evolving role and benefits that the Census provides to Australian society through actual case studies. It also features a comprehensive look at the reasons for changing the questions on the Census form, and the differing collection and processing methods and dissemination techniques that the ABS has elected to adopt for Census data. It also identifies the policies and events that have impacted upon the different aspects of the Census.

Year Book Australia

The Year Book, the ABS's flagship publication, was launched at ABS House by the Hon. Chris Pearce, Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, on 21 January 2005 to invited guests, ABS staff and the media.

The Year Book Australia 2005 provides a comprehensive and definitive source of information about Australia. Over 900 pages long, it includes subjects such as population, income, housing, education, agriculture, prices and international accounts. Data is presented in tables, maps and graphs.

Available now

Order online at www.abs.gov.au, or telephone 1300 135 070. Have your credit card details ready.

As part of ABS's centenary celebrations the 2005 Year Book also includes a special article on the history of the Bureau and a brief history of the Census of Population and Housing. A number of feature articles also show how our country has changed over the past 100 years. Articles on the completion of the Adelaide to Darwin railway and the short-term economic impact of the 2003 Rugby World Cup also feature in this issue of the Year Book.

To celebrate 100 years since the foundation of the ABS, both the hard copy Year Book and its CD-ROM companion are presented as a special offer in one package, making it great value for money.

The CD-ROM compliments the hard cover version by giving you rapid access to every subject. A simple interface and a full electronic index make it a convenient source of up to date information.

Did you know?

Western Australia has the highest proportion of United Kingdom-born residents (202,000 persons, or 11% of residents)

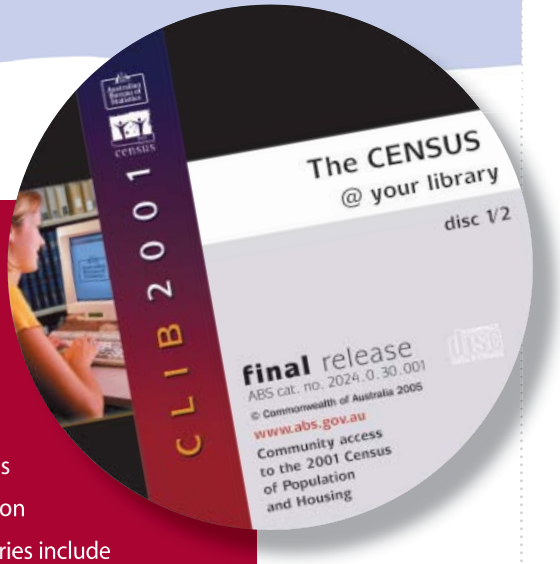
Final release of CLIB 2001

The Final Release of CLIB 2001, the product from the Census designed for use in libraries, is now available – giving the community access to the full range of 2001 Census data free of charge.

This final release of CLIB 2001 includes revisions to data contained in previous releases and improvements to its installation procedures. It replaces all previous versions of CLIB 2001.

The data contained in CLIB 2001 – Final Release is formatted into dozens of easy to use tables from the Basic Community Profile, Indigenous Profile, Time Series Profile, Expanded Community Profile and Working Population Profile. It also contains the complete range of Classification Counts from the 2001 Census, which contain detailed data for each variable for Capital Cities and States and Territories. The data is available to either view on the screen or print.

CLIB 2001 has an intuitive interface that allows you to easily find and select the data you want. Area selections are made easy with a simple drill-down map interface, allowing you to make your selection from an area as large as Australia to as small as a Collection District. Once an area is selected, you can conveniently browse the available data by topic or by profile.



Information for libraries

CLIB 2001 is available free of charge to eligible libraries through the Library Extension Program (LEP). Eligible libraries include public libraries, university libraries, Parliamentary libraries and the National and State libraries.

All LEP member libraries and those libraries who received previous releases be sent a copy of CLIB 2001 Final Release. Other libraries may request a copy by emailing library@abs.gov.au

An extensive range of Census reference material is included with CLIB 2001, including the Census Dictionary, the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC), and a replica of the household Census form.

Did you know?

In 2005 the ABS celebrates its centenary and the ABS web site has its 10th anniversary.

Australia hosts ISI Conference

The ABS, along with the Statistical Society of Australia and the International Statistical Institute, jointly hosted the 55th Session of the International Statistical Institute at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre from April 5 to 12, 2005.

Established in 1885, the International Statistical Institute (ISI) is one of the world's oldest scientific associations. The ISI is composed of more than 2000 individual elected members who are internationally recognised as leaders in the field of statistics.

The ISI has held Sessions since 1853 bringing together academic, government and private sector statisticians and experts from related fields, with Australia last hosting the event in 1967. The Sessions provide an opportunity for statisticians to attend scientific meetings focusing on their own speciality. At the same time they can absorb new research in other statistical fields that may have unanticipated applications to their area of interest. Many have spoken of the valuable 'cross pollination' of ideas that they have experienced during the ISI Session with the conference proving to be an excellent opportunity for members to congregate and exchange innovative ideas, forge new links and discuss current trends and developments in the statistical world.

A diverse and cutting-edge Scientific Program was developed for the 2005 ISI Session which included presentation of papers, key note speakers of world repute, poster sessions, tutorials and short courses. Theme days covered Statistics and Finance, Environmental Statistics and Genomics.

Many Census related papers were presented over the duration of the conference, including a presentation by the ABS's Soo Kong on the developments of the CensusAtSchool project in Australia. The use of GPS in the 2004 Census in East Timor was also discussed.

The hosting of the 2005 ISI Conference is just one of many events the ABS is involved in as part of its Centenary celebrations.

The ABS hosted the 55th ISI Conference.

Census collectors have a bone to pick with pesky dogs

Some Census collectors found the 1986 Census ruff going

Picture: Barbara Hill

The 10th Census of Population and Housing was conducted on Monday, 30 June 1986. Some 38,000 ABS employees were involved in the collection and distribution of material to households for this census. However, in August of that year a survey of a very different nature was undertaken by the ABS.

In 1986 the Law Reform Commission of New South Wales (LRC) was undertaking work regarding the control of dogs in the state and the means of imposing civil or criminal liability in respect of dogs on private land. As part of its investigation the LRC approached the ABS for information about the extent to which Census collectors experienced problems with accessing properties where dogs were involved. As a result of discussion between the two parties the Survey of Dog Problems in the 1986 Population Census was undertaken in August 1986. For the purposes of the survey a dog "attack" was defined as one where the collector was bitten by a dog, with some resulting injury or clothing damage.

The 1986 survey yielded some interesting findings to say the least. Overall, the chance of a collector being attacked by a dog when visiting a house was about one in 5000, with 87.4% of these attacks occurring on private land.

It appears that dogs weren't the only concern for Census collectors. One collector was bitten by a horse, another encountered a large bull standing guard at a house, and a third was chased off a property by a large pig. Bird life also caused some problems, with emus, plovers and geese either attacking or pursuing ABS staff.

Census collectors working for national statistical organisations overseas have also encountered similar problems. One incident in Malaysia resulted in the arrest of a man who let his two dogs loose to chase a Census enumerator.

Today a comprehensive set of guidelines has been compiled for Census collectors in order to minimise the risk of any undesired dog-related incidents.

Enhancing the National Population Census

The ABS has released a Discussion Paper entitled *Enhancing the Population Census: Developing a Longitudinal View*. The paper seeks the views of Australians on a proposal to enhance the value of 2006 Census of Population and Housing data by combining it over time with data from other Censuses, and using it with a limited number of additional datasets.

The central feature of the proposal is the creation of a Statistical Longitudinal Census Dataset (SLCD) – this involves combining the information provided in the 2006 Population Census, with information provided in other Censuses, using statistical techniques. Other parts of the proposal outline using the Census data in combination with other selected data sets, such as ABS household surveys and birth and death register data. The proposal is described in more detail in the discussion paper available on the ABS web site.

In its present form the Census only provides a 'snapshot' about Australian people and households once every five years. The SLCD would provide the means to identify patterns of change in social and economic circumstances, for individuals and households over time. Insights might be gained into the relationship between peoples' social and economic situation over their life; their health outcomes; or the educational or economic outcomes of their children as they in turn grow to be adults.

The proposal does not involve the ABS keeping name and address information from the Census. The ABS will continue to provide the same level of protection for the confidentiality of people's information as it has done for the past 100 years of its history.

No decision on this proposal has been made. Integral to the ABS decision on whether to proceed will be the level of community support. The paper calls for members of the public and other interested parties to submit their views on the proposal for ABS consideration.

Those wishing to provide feedback can lodge a submission on-line through the web site, or on a paper form. To request a copy of the discussion paper or submission form, email client.services@abs.gov.au or call 1300 135 070.

The closing date for submissions is **10 June 2005**. At the conclusion of the submission period, all the submissions will be carefully considered and the proposal will be reviewed in the light of the feedback received. An in-principle decision on whether to proceed will be made in late June 2005. We will not proceed unless there is broad community support.

census.users@abs.gov.au

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For all ABS inquiries, call National Information and Referral Service: 1300 135 070

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census.users@abs.gov.au	to receive census information

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Other ABS Products				
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Measures of Australia's Progress	1370.0	45.00		
Australian Social Trends	4102.0	50.00		
Thematic Publications				
Population Characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians	4713.0	38.00		
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Australian Census Analytic Program (ACAP)				
Counting the Homeless	2050.0	30.00		
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Northern Territory	2015.7	28.00		
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Selected Characteristics for Urban Centres and Localities, Australia	2016.0	32.00		
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